

BIRTH AND CREATION

"Brother Against Brother"

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I cannot believe I actually came to the same college as my older sister; gosh, this was the time when I actually could choose what school I went to without the possibility of being the little sister. Do not get me wrong, I love my sister and we totally get along, but I could not help but constantly compare myself to her. I always felt like I fell short. I was seventh in my class, she was second; she was the lead in every musical, I was in the chorus; she was an officer in the clubs she was in, I was just a member. I was, and am, so proud of everything she does, but I could not help but want to beat her at something, though.

To some degree I had felt a rivalry with my sister: my sibling. Most likely, anyone growing up with a sibling can relate to some extent of sibling rivalry; it just cannot be helped. It really makes perfect sense too, because brothers and sister share the same house, the same family - the same parents. Each child wants to be the recipient of attention and praise, to stand out. This natural concept has been acknowledged throughout history, even to the beginning of time.

Illustrations of sibling rivalry are discovered in the relationship of the left twin and right twin in *The Iroquois Depict the World on the Turtle's Back* and Cain and Abel in the book of *Genesis*. Because the

nature of sibling rivalry is a recurring relationship in human existence, examining this competitive nature in these two sibling relationships can help us understand the nature of sibling rivalry today.

Competition: “intolerant of rivalry or disposed to suspect rivalry.” In other words, competition is the product of rivalry, and it is competition that plants the discrepancy and anger between the siblings. “In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part brought of the firstling of the flock” (10). We can tell from this verse, that whether they realize it or not, competition is present. The only two sons, or brothers, are giving their own “offering;” it cannot be helped that they will be matched against each other. It is not until God has different opinions of the offerings that the competition is made aware. When Abel feels as if he has lost the competition of providing the better offering to the Lord, his emotions take over his thought.

The issue of competition is certainly a stronger aspect of the relationship between the Left twin versus the Right twin. Ever since these twins were in the womb together disagreements were eminent. Because of their distaste for one another, they continually strive to beat the other in whatever event being accomplished. For example, when the twins are using their “creative powers” to create animals for their world, they create based on the other twin's conceptions (20). After each animal the right-handed twin makes, the left-handed models a predator for it, just in spite of the other. The competition between the two is prevalent and alive; even as the two become grown men,

they still "[contest] with one another" because neither twin wins or loses (21). As their "conflict [becomes] sharper and sharper," their competitive drive becomes deeper and deeper (21).

From this competition forms jealousy: the deeper and dangerous part of these sibling rivalries. The epitome of Cain's jealousy emerges after God's reaction is given in response to the brother's offerings and the competition is made aware. Abel sacrifices the "fat portions" from the "firstlings of his flock," the very best of what he has (10). The Lord in response, "has regard for Abel and his offering" for he gave what is most useful and needful to himself, back to God (10). Cain, on the other hand, forth put "fruit of the ground" as his offering, which is obviously not the adequate sacrifice the Lord intends, therefore he has "no regard" for it (10). In response to Abel's acceptance, "Cain [is] very angry" and jealous that he is not the favored one-- it is Abel that takes that position. He, the older brother, cannot even comprehend the fact that his little brother is receiving all the praise. Jealousy overtakes him.

Jealousy, furthermore, consumes the mind of the right-handed twin because of the attention the left-handed twin obtains, just like Abel. The right twin does everything right: "always [tells] the truth, and he always [tries] to accomplish what [seems] to be right and reasonable" (20). Therefore, when the grandmother's affection is directed at the left twin, the right twin cannot stand it. Why does the disobedient one get the attention? The Grandmother does not appear fair, just as God does not appear fair with Cain and Abel. The "right-

handed twin [is] angry and [grows] more angry” as he thinks about the situation (20). Jealousy devours the mind of the right twin; he should be the one getting the praise, not his brother.

The extreme competitive and jealous nature of these rivalries develop into the harshest outcome possible. Cain’s heart weighs so heavy with anger and jealous rage that he lashes out on the being that represents everything he doesn’t have-- Abel. His brother is the shepherd; he is the farmer. His brother knows to give the absolute best; he gives the leftovers. His brother is favored with the Lord; he is not. Disgusted; Cain “[rises] up against his brother. . . and [kills] him” (10). It made no difference that it is his brother, perhaps that is even more of the reason he killed him. His brother is born in the same exact circumstances as he is, yet he appears to have gotten so much more. Cain is unable to appreciate what he has that Abel does not. God does not give everyone the same talents, but that does not mean He’s not fair. It just means we are supposed to celebrate our own talents. Just because God did not have “regard” for Cain’s offering, does not mean he is worse than Abel; it means that Cain will just have to work on that weakness. However, Cain is too enraged and jealous that he chooses the “sin lurking behind the door” (10). The nature of this sibling rivalry is strong and can result in the most extreme circumstance.

Murder also lurks in the right-handed twin as the rivalry against his brother continues. These brothers knew that their intense loathing of one another could only be solved by “one of them [vanquishing] the other” (21). Their total distaste for one another

would only be ended by the death of one of them. The right-handed twin, whom consumed more anger and jealousy, is the one that destroyed his brother. "With one touch he destroyed his brother," because of the unfair attention and favor the left twin undeservingly receives according to his brother's standards (21). Just like with Cain and Abel, this sibling situation is resolved through death

The nature of sibling rivalry can be very intense because siblings are forced to share so much. We know this rivalry is very natural, considering it is one of the first stories/lessons we are introduced to in our own lives. Sibling rivalry is alive in many different cultures, as these two stories relate to us that competition and jealousy are two strong attributes of the nature of this rivalry. Both instances teach us that this rivalry is often the way we are oriented to society's idea of competition, jealousy, and even the origins of murder. The nature of this human relationship is quite unique from any other and will continue as long as siblings exist.